



Commissioner Adam Greshin  
Department of Finance and Management  
State of Vermont  
October 16, 2025

Barre  
Bennington  
Brattleboro  
Burlington  
Castleton  
Charleston  
Chester  
Colchester  
Danville  
Derby Line  
Dummerston  
Fayston  
Glover  
Grafton  
Grand Isle  
Greensboro  
Hardwick  
Highgate  
Island Pond  
Ludlow  
Lyndon  
Lyndonville  
Manchester  
Middlebury  
Montpelier  
Moretown  
Mount Holly  
Newport  
Pittsford  
Randolph  
Richmond  
Rutland  
Saxtons River  
Shelburne  
South Burlington  
South Hero  
South Pomfret  
St Johnsbury  
Stowe  
Strafford  
Swanton  
Tunbridge

Dear Commissioner Greshin,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our engagement with the state of Vermont, and for the continued state appropriations which is key to our work.

### Organizational background

The VSO fosters and encourages the love of music throughout Vermont (mission statement). Established in 1934, our work follows the four strategic plan goals: to provide meaningful, evocative, and high caliber musical experiences; serve as a resource for statewide music education; to embed inclusivity and equity in our work; and to operate a sustainable non-profit business. We serve Vermont with statewide concerts and educational events, and rely on partnerships with cultural institutions, schools, artists, and community organizations to realize these events.

### FY25 HIGHLIGHTS LAST SEASON (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

- **80 live concerts and educational events** to an audience of 25,275
- **\$1.5M in employment** remuneration paid to **129** musicians, arts practitioners, educators, technicians and administrators
- **\$732K** paid to companies (venues, marketing, tech production, housing, etc.)
- **Engagement** with 38 venues, schools, arts organizations, veterans and disability-access organizations
- **5,205 young VT students** took part in music education activities
- **Reaching 48 Vermont towns** with live performance and music education

### FY26 HIGHLIGHTS THIS SEASON (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

- **68 live concerts and educational events** to an est. audience of 23,000
- **\$1.45M in employment** remuneration paid to **126** musicians, arts practitioners, educators, technicians and administrators
- **\$745K** paid to companies (venues, marketing, tech production, housing, etc.)
- **Engagement** with 34 venues, schools, arts organizations, veterans and disability-access organizations
- **4,900 young Vermont musicians** engaged in VSO performances, workshops and in-school classes
- **Reaching 42 Vermont towns** with live performance and music education

## KEEPING CLASSICAL MUSIC NEW

We're **premiering four new commissioned pieces of music**, two by local high school students, one by Burlington-based composer Michael Schachter, and one via the League of American Orchestras commissioning program. In August, we partnered with Lyric Theatre for three performances of **Oklahoma! in Concert** in Stowe, revived the **Grace Potter & VSO** concert in September at the Grand Point North Festival, and are partnering with **The Moth Radio Hour** for statewide concerts in November. Complementary art forms help us reach new audiences: **vocalists** (Summer Festival Tour statewide, Farmers' Night in Montpelier, Carmina Burana in Burlington), **storytelling** (Made in Vermont statewide tour), and **movies** (Disney: Around the World in Rutland and Burlington).

➤ **Outcome:** 5,560 attendees; \$262K in employment for approx. 85 arts practitioners.

## STATEWIDE MUSIC EDUCATION

Our eight individual education programs reaching ages pre K-12 include:

1. **OnStage** includes music students in St. Albans, Montpelier, Manchester, and Burlington working side-by-side in rehearsal for performances with the VSO in their communities.
2. **First Steps in Music** provides six weeks of in-school teaching as an introduction to music at four pre-K schools.
3. **VSO/Music-COMP Composers** support two high school students by having their compositions premiered with VSO's Brass Quintet Tour & Farmers' Night chamber orchestra concerts.
4. **10-15 Young Composers** students in Hardwick (and one other school TBC) work with VSO's musicians and Music-COMP instructors, learning how to compose music and hosting a final public concert of their compositions at the school.
5. **Instrument masterclasses taught by VSO musicians** at St. Albans and Montpelier schools take place November-April for 20-30 music students as they prepare for their school spring concerts.
6. **Musicians in Schools** is VSO's statewide youth education program, reaching approx. 30 schools each academic year and focused on ages K-8<sup>th</sup> grade. String, woodwind, and brass trios explore classical, jazz, and folk music in a series of 45-minute presentations.
7. **Student Insiders** sponsors tickets for 150 Rutland and Manchester-area middle and high school students and their families to attend VSO concerts for free in November and March.
8. **Musical Petting Zoo** with every Summer Festival Tour concert includes percussion and string instruments for young audiences to try, and at Vermont Public's Curious Kids Day in November.

Vermont's music educators can earn **professional development credits** towards their licensure by participating in VSO's volunteer chorus via Vermont State University Castleton's music department. **Open Rehearsals** for VSO at the Flynn concerts allow the public to experience the orchestra's rehearsal process, and **Composers on the Rocks** pre-concert listening workshops give deeper insight into major composers featured in VSO concerts.

➤ **Outcome:** 5,200 students reached across all 14 VT counties

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

**Venues the VSO engages:** **Addison County** (Weybridge Community Church, Middlebury Inn), **Bennington County** (First Cong. Church Manchester, Southern VT Arts Center, Bennington College), **Caledonia County** (Burke Mountain), **Chittenden County** (The Flynn, Elley Long Music Center, Shelburne Museum, South Burlington Library), **Essex County** (Island Pond Community Park), **Lamoille County** (Spruce Peak Performing Arts, von Trapp Family Lodge Concert Meadow), **Orange County** (Musicians in Schools venues), **Orleans County** (Highland Center for the Arts, United Church of Newport), **Rutland County** (Paramount Theatre, VT State University Castleton), **Windham County** (Grafton Ponds, Bellows Falls Opera House), **Windsor County** (Artistree, Ludlow Auditorium, Saskadena Six), **Washington County** (Barre Opera House, Warren United Church, Vermont State House) and schools across all 14 Vermont counties.

**Arts Partners we work with:** include Artistree, Clemmons Family Farm, Counterpoint Chorus, Friends of Ludlow Auditorium, Grand Point North Festival, Halcyon Chorus, Lyric Theatre, Moth Radio Hour, Opera Company of Middlebury, Pentangle Arts, Stowe Performing Arts, and Vermont Youth Orchestra.

- **Outcome:** Statewide collaboration with 50+ arts partners and schools.

## GROWING THE ECONOMY

**Bringing donations into Vermont:** We've secured \$182K in financial support from 137 unique donors, trusts, and companies based outside of Vermont, supporting VSO's Vermont-based activities.

**Visitors to Vermont:** 22% of our FY25 audiences came from out of state, generating over \$203K in ticket revenue.

- **Outcome:** \$385K in revenue brought to Vermont from out-of-state sources tied to VSO events

## AFFORDABILITY, COMMUNITY

**Music for everyone:** Over 265 free tickets are provided to clients and members of four statewide organizations supporting the blind and visually impaired; to National Guard family members; and to arts organizations supporting youth, and mental illness and disability. Summer Festival Tour concert tickets start at \$5; and VSO's main orchestra concerts in Burlington and Rutland start at \$10, with Jukebox concerts at \$15.

**Accessibility:** 68 statewide concerts and education events provide geographic accessibility including free concerts in Bennington, Castleton, Grafton, Ludlow, Montpelier, S. Burlington, S. Pomfret, St. Johnsbury, and Warren. Nine schools receive fully subsidized music education programs. Large print programs are available; VSO indoor concerts are in ADA compliant venues.

**Giving Back:** Our three Holiday Pops programs partner with local Rotary clubs and volunteers to solicit donations from audiences for local food shelves (810 lbs. of food was donated in 2024).

- **Outcome:** 14 VT counties reached; over 700 free or reduced price tickets are provided.

## EQUITY LENSE

Of VSO's four strategic plan goals, one is to "Embed inclusivity and equity in the work of the VSO." To that end:

**Representation and engagement:** Every VSO concert includes music by Black and/or female composers (in FY26: 9 different Black composers, and 7 female composers are represented). VSO is a member of the League of American Orchestras Inclusive Stages consortium, a 2-yr program to increase racial diversity amongst orchestra players. As members of the national diversity organization Sphinx Organization, VSO hires hiring up-and-coming Black instrumentalists identified through their audition program. Four FY26 soloists are BIPOC, representing 57% of the season's guest artists. Seven of VSO's nine staff are women. 50% of VSO's Board members are female; 15% are BIPOC; one is disabled; 45% live outside of Chittenden County..

- **Outcome:** Inclusion of racial, gender, and geographic diversity is embedded in VSO artistic programming, staff, and board.

## FY26 & 27 BUDGETS

We are thankful for the \$154,170 appropriation from the State of Vermont for FY26, received in July 2025, which supports our 2025/26 season. Our FY27 proposed budget reflects a 3% increase plus an additional \$40,000 increase our base appropriation.

FY26 appropriation: \$154,170

Plus 3% = \$4,625

Plus base appropriation increase starting FY27 = \$40,000

**FY27 appropriation request = \$198,795**

The \$40,000 base increase is for recurring costs associated with external technical suppliers (\$18,000), musician fees/pension (\$19,000), and education program subsidies (\$3,000).

1. **Increased cost of outdoor technical suppliers** above 3% for summer outdoor events, required to cover a full 50+ piece orchestra & chorus in five venues on 24-hour, overnight statewide multi-day tours, as well as indoor concert venue hire, technical equipment and labor. Here are examples of our two main suppliers (Atomic Pro Audio & Euphoria Event Solutions):

	FY24	FY25	FY26 (est)	FY27 (est)
Tent, stage, sound, lights, power	\$149,560	\$161,480	\$171,170	\$181,440

= Average 6.5% increase cost to VSO per annum

2. **Increased union musicians costs** above 3% per our collective bargaining agreement. By contract, our 54 musicians receive an annual salary increase of 3% plus 2% pension (FY24), then 3% pension (FY25) then 5% pension (FY26 and FY27). This is an average 6.3% increased cost to VSO per annum.

3. **Decrease in schools' ability to provide partial financial support** for VSO's educational programs, with no corresponding increase in private grants and the loss of NEA grants for education. Here is an example with our Musicians in Schools programs:

	FY24	FY25	FY26 (est)	FY27 (est)
# of performances	27	25	25	25
Cost of perfs	\$16,050	\$17,250	\$19,395	\$22,025
% covered by schools	31%	24%	18%	14%
Loss to be subsidized	\$11,075	\$13,110	\$15,904	\$18,942

In addition, we are completing a graduated three-year, post pandemic period of supplemental draws from our endowed funds. Our Board has tasked us with reducing the draw from approx. 8% approved for FY24 & FY25; and 6% for FY26 to 4% for FY27 and beyond. This requires an increase in earned income, contributed funds and grants to cover our existing costs, as well as the three points mentioned above. We are hoping the State of Vermont will support us in this endeavor.

Our staff, Board, musicians, and volunteers express gratitude for the State of Vermont's ongoing support of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. Thank you for your commitment to music and providing much-needed support for us to fulfill the VSO mission and our values:

**VSO MISSION:** To foster and encourage the love of music throughout Vermont.

**VSO VALUES:** Music, Statewide Community, Inclusivity, Creativity and Stewardship

Sincerely,



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